

Haven Town

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Summary: Within the walls of Haven Town, a mistake has been repeated... (suspenseful, I think!)

Haven Town

> <meta name="Generator"> Pok  freak #1: The Truth about Prefect Ko

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The Breeder's Son

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Mercury Craine flipped through the pages of the new "Pok  maniac's Monthly Journal", skimming this article here, that one there, as she sat on the crate of potions her father had left her to unpack. She sighed. "I would never have even _seen_ a Pok  mon if it weren't for these magazines," she muttered.

"Grr  ow?" Flare grumbled, looking up.

"Sorry." The Growlithe put his head back down and sighed. "Other than you." She blew the slate-colored hair that had given her her name, even at birth, out of her equally quicksilver eyes.

People said that Mercury Craine had a pixie look to her, with her silver hair and somewhat darker, grayish eyes, but truthfully, she didn't see it. Bad enough her hair was gray from the moment she was born: worse, that it didn't make her look any older than she really was. People always thought she was twelve, not fourteen. She blew her bangs out of her eyes again. "If it weren't for you, these magazines, and Dr. Ko's Breeding Center, I would never, ever, see a Pok  mon."

"Graow," Flare agreed, blowing some fur out of his eyes in the exact same way Mercury blew her hair out of hers. It was a habit he'd picked up from her.

"It's so stupid!" she cried, slamming the magazine down next to her. Flare sat up, startled. "I mean, Dad runs a Pokéshop, right? I should be seeing lots of Pokémon! I should be a Pokémon trainer, like he was! I-" She sighed, her shoulders slumping forward. She rubbed Flare's head with her foot. "I should be doing a lot of things, Flare," she mumbled. "I should be doing anything, but be stuck here in the store."

"Growlithe," he grumbled in agreement. His ears turned backwards as he scowled. Then his ears perked up again, and he sat up straight - just before the happy jingle of the bell on the door rang through the shop.

"Great," Mercury sighed. She slid off the box she had yet to unpack - even though she should have had it unpacked an hour ago. "Gotta mind the shop, Flare. You be good and stay here."

Flare stood up, and snorted a little. Instead of staying, he marched out into the shop ahead of her. "Growlithe!" he barked at the customer.

"Yes, hello, Flare," a familiar voice chuckled. Mercury rolled her eyes and smiled. With a grunt, she tore the lid off the potions - and groaned as her magazine slid behind it. "Great," she muttered. Her father didn't mind if one magazine of the shipment got a little mangled - it could go up for display purposes, so the rest stayed brand-new - but now she'd have to unpack the boxes to make them light enough to move so she could get her magazine back. Unlike the supplier, she didn't have a Machoke to carry the boxes around - just her own, human arms. She took six potions out of the box - three in each hand - and hurried through the curtain that separated the storage area she had holed herself up in from the main shop.

Flare's pleased yips greeted her as she placed the potions on the counter. Leaning over the counter, she smiled down at the boy tickling the Growlithe's ears just like he liked it. "You must get your way with Pokémon from your dad, Prefect."

The dark-haired boy looked up, not at all surprised.

Mercury had always thought there was something odd about Prefect Ko - and not just his first name. He had started coming to town, off and on, for the last year or so, to pick up the weekly supplies for his father's Breeding Center for his dad. Mercury was always happier to see Prefect than his father, Simon Ko - the two had nothing in common.

Dr. Ko was pale, with a shock of bluish-white hair and startling, wild, magenta eyes: Prefect was deeply tanned year-round, with brown-black hair and gray-blue eyes that always seemed sad, as if he knew something he didn't want to. Dr. Ko had a scratchy, demanding voice that grated against her spine: Prefect's, instead, was soft, almost shy, as if he was only speaking because he had no choice, and, even then, he spoke with the utmost respect to whomever he was speaking to. There was always something very formal about Prefect Ko, something that just didn't seem quite right for a boy who looked sixteen. Most of the sixteen year old boys in Haven Town were jerks, or at least acted like them in public.

Dr. Ko had all the appearance of a man on the verge of insanity from

lack of sleep and sunlight. Prefect looked more like he could've played the younger brother of a soap opera star.

Everyone in Haven Town agreed - Prefect took after his motherâ€| whoever she'd been.

"Perhaps," Prefect replied vaguely, snapping her out of her thoughts. His familiar, vague smile seemed amused. Blushing, she ducked down to grab a cardboard box for the potions, so it'd be easier for him to carry them back to his father's Breeding Center. "How many potions are left on the shelf?" she asked him as she stood up again.

He pointed at two potions he had placed on the counter. As of now, none."

She sighed. "Hang on. I'll get some more." She scowled a little as Flare leaned heavily against Prefect's leg, his tongue lolling out of his mouth. "Flare, you behave."

"I don't mind," Prefect assured her, reaching down to scratch Flare's ears again.

Mercury quickly grabbed four more potions out of the heavy wooden box in the back. "How many bags of PokÃ©mix do you need this week?" she called.

"There is enough out here," Prefect replied. His voice seemed no louder, but she heard him clearly through the heavy curtain.

She pushed through the curtain again. "Somebody brought a Farfetch'd in here yesterday," she said.

"Ah, yes. Felden Sprang. Odd fellow. He wanted his Farfetch'd to stop relying so heavily on her leek, and use more flying attacks. She was very stubborn."

"You helped your dad, huh?"

"She was a difficult student, but bright. It was a pleasure to help her gain confidence in her other attacks."

She raised her eyebrows. "You taught the Farfetch'd yourself?"

He shrugged a little. "Father was busy," he replied quietly.

"He always seems busy to me," Mercury said, frowning. "Sometimes I'm willing to bet you do all the PokÃ©mon raising."

He smiled a little behind the dozen bottles of potion and three bags of dry PokÃ©mix Instant PokÃ©mon food, but didn't reply.

There wasn't anything else to do: Dr. Ko paid for his supplies by the month, so all Prefect had to do was walk out. He didn't seem to want to, though.

"Haven't seen you in awhile," Mercury said, leaning against the counter. She was in no rush to really work, either. She didn't blame him for stalling; the way back to the Breeding Center was all uphill.

"We've been busy, at home," he answered, not looking at her. His voice was so soft, she barely heard him.

"Is something wrong?"

He shook his head, looking at her again. "Why should anything be wrong?" he asked. He was about as convincing as a man whose leg had just been cut off.

She just looked at him, waiting for him to answer his own question.

He stared right back, making it very clear he wasn't going to do it.

She rolled her eyes. "You haven't convinced me," she told him flatly, crossing her arms on the counter and leaning on them. "And you're not leaving here 'till you do."

He smiled vaguely. "Then maybe I should sit down."

She uncrossed her arms, and rested her forehead in one hand. "I just don't get you, Prefect Ko." She looked up at him again. His face was expressionless. "You leave that center of yours what, once a month? Twice? How old are you, and nobody has seen you before about a year ago!"

"I wasâ€| elsewhere," he replied quietly.

"Where?" she demanded.

He shrugged.

She groaned, looking up at the ceiling, as if it would help her. It refused. With another sigh she looked back at Prefect. He didn't seem in the mood to be helpful, either. "What do you do up there, anyway? You don't go to school. You don't work in town."

"Father teaches me," he replied, not looking at her again. Instead he returned to scratching Flare's ears. "I work at the center."

"Prefect, you have half the girls in town at your beck and call, y'know," she pointed out. He smiled a little, looking at her. "Don't look at me like that! You know what I mean! Sarah, Mary, Liluaniaâ€| they make me sick, the way they stare if you're ever in town! Look! Go ahead!" She pointed behind him. He turned around. Through the window in the door, the three girls she'd mentioned could be seen clearly across the street. Sarah burst out giggling. Mary waved, then burst out giggling too.

Prefect turned back, folded his arms on the counter, and rested his chin on it, looking glum.

For a moment, Mercury thought she saw â€| shimmering, like heat off the pavement, in the aisle between shelves just behind Prefect. She saw Sarah, Mary, and Liluania scream and run in three different directions. She shrugged: they were all airheads anyway. And the heat-like shimmering had probably been her imagination.

Mercury copied his position. "It's not the end of the world, y'know," she told him.

He smiled a little - or maybe it was a grimace. "Perhaps not. I try not to think about them."

"Do you ever get bored, clammed up in there?" she asked.

He shrugged one shoulder, just slightly. "Sometimes."

"Listen." He looked at her again. "At 6:00, me and the other Haven Town Hitmonchans are going up against the Viridian City Victreebells - well, we would be, but we're a man short. We have four people out with sprained ankles because of the hole near second base."

One of his thin eyebrows moved upward in a rare look of skepticism. "Mercury," he said flatly, "I have never played a game in my life - much less baseball."

"Oh, come on," she grinned. "It doesn't matter if you can't hit, catch, throw, run - it doesn't matter. We need a body. We can stick you out in outfield if you don't think you can do well. Come on. Your town needs you, Prefect Ko!"

He sighed. "It is a nice idea," he said, "but I-"

"Good," she cut him off. "It's settled. Tonight, six, be there, or we're all coming up there to get you. Got it?"

For a moment he looked - well, whatever it was, it passed too quickly for her to catch. Then he sighed. "I'll have to ask Father," he told her, standing up straight. "But I will try."

"Great." She grinned. "See you later. And hey." He looked at her as he picked up the box. "Even if you can't play, if we get someone else, come and root for us, okay? Please?"

He smiled. "I'll try." He nodded slightly, then shoved the door open with his elbow. The bell jangled gaily as it shut behind him.

She blew her hair out of her eyes. "He is just too shy," she muttered. She turned to go in the back to actually get her work done, then stopped. She looked at the counter again.

Two bottles of potion were right where Prefect had left them.

"That's a first," she murmured, putting them behind the counter. She shrugged a little. "I'll get them to him at the game." She shoved through the curtain, and reached into the box to take out the potions to put on the shelves. She frowned as her hand brushed paper.

She pulled a slightly mangled copy of "Pokémaniac's Monthly Journal" out of the box, and frowned. What? She climbed onto a smaller box, then leaned over the crate. There wasn't a magazine behind it. She looked at the magazine that had been in the box. "How'd it get there?" she asked no one.

The Secret of the Tower

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At 5:00, with her burnt-orange uniform in place and her silver hair in a ponytail strung through her brown baseball cap, Mercury trudged up the hill toward the one gate of Haven Town, and its infamous Pokémon Tower.

Haven Town was a bit of an oddity, as far as towns went. Its oddity came from its history.

Once, long ago, it had been a poor outpost, a place in between the then Fort Viridian and Celadon Plantation. Its one noteworthy structure was a four-story stone tower that stood on the road just before it. The outpost acted as a hospital for humans and Pokémon injured in a war going on at that time. Because they never asked which side their patients fought for, and because they always returned their patients, both armies decided to build a protective wall around the outpost at nearly the same time (though on opposite sides). A huge battle broke out when the two opponents discovered one another, and, in the process, destroyed their walls and most of the outpost. The battle fell apart when a third army - a Pokémon army, led by the Pokémon who lived with the keeper of the tower, which housed the Pokémon hospital. (This was in the day before Pokécenters, when Pokémon towers housed breeders and herbalists rather than volunteers and machines. Currently, very few of these towers still exist, as most were torn down in order to build Pokécenters in their places. The best known one, of those that remain, is that of Lavender Town; there is also the one of Haven Town, as well as Opalium City. The ruins of Viridian's Pokémon Tower can be found, with much searching, in Viridian Forest.) No one can agree as to what that brave Pokémon was - some say an Arcanine; some say a Moltres, or an Articuno; some say it was a mere Pidgey or Rattata. Whatever it was, it led the injured, healing Pokémon onto the battlefield. For the first time in recorded history, an organized army of Pokémon took on an army of humans; and, in that first time, they won. The Brave Pokémon is said to have fallen in the last shot fired, to die three days later. The master of the Pokémon Tower was chosen to pass judgement over the prisoners. The master of the Tower made simple rules: the prisoners were to be tended, their wounds allowed to heal, and then they would rebuild what they had destroyed as well as rebuild, and finish, the walls they had started. Once those things were done, they were free to go. A year later, Fort Haven was completed, but not one soldier left. When the war was over, the soldiers at Fort Haven sent for their families, and Fort Haven became Haven Town.

In the last century, however, Haven Town started to decline. The growth of Viridian City so nearby weakened the little, walled town, whose famous walls kept it from growing any larger than it was. People started moving out, to move into Viridian, increasing the town's peril. With the building of Viridian's state-of-the-art Pokécenter, Haven Town's historic Pokémon Tower was forced to close its doors. The Tower stood, abandoned, for almost ten years, until a strange, secretive man named Simon Ko moved into it. For twenty years, he holed away in the Tower; no one knew what he did in there. Then, five years ago, he opened it up as a Breeding Center. At first he only received a few customers in town, but his amazing ability to evolve Pokémon within a month led his fame to spread. Finally,

things were starting to look up in Haven Town. People returned. The Pokéshop run by Joshua Craine, a retired Pokémon trainer, was saved from going out of business. The entire town was salvaged from extinction.

All thanks to Dr. Simon Ko.

The backs of Mercury's legs were aching by the time she finally reached the heavy wooden door of the Pokémon Tower. "How does he do this day in and day out?" she muttered to herself, pounding on the door with her free hand. In the other, she cradled the two potions in her baseball glove.

The door tugged open suddenly, just a few inches, but she jumped anyway. "What do you want?" the scratchy voice of Dr. Ko demanded.

"Is Prefect here?" she asked.

Behind his oval glasses, Dr. Ko's bright, Rattata-like eyes narrowed. "What do you want with him?"

She frowned. "When he picked up your supplies today, he left a couple of the potions by accident. I just wanted to tell him-"

"Prefect!" She cringed as his sandpaper-on-gravel voice went much higher than it should have been allowed to go. "Prefect! What's this about you leaving?"

"Father?" Prefect's voice was barely audible, from distance, and the heavy door.

"The shop girl's here telling me you went in town today! What about this?"

The sound of light footsteps down stairs could be heard. When they stopped, Dr. Ko frowned. "What did I tell you about wearing that?" he demanded.

"I'll deal with this, Father."

"You'll stop that this instant!"

"Not _now_!" Dr. Ko disappeared abruptly, and the door swung open wider to reveal Prefect, exactly as he had looked before, and had always looked - dark hair, dark eyes, tanned skin, a sweatshirt, jeans, and sneakers. Mercury wondered what Dr. Ko hadn't liked him wearing. "Thank you, for delivering the potions," he said, smiling his vague smile. "I was going to pick them up later, perhaps tomorrow."

"You're not coming to the game?" she asked, frowning.

He shook his head. "I can't." A crash of glass was heard from above. Mercury jumped. Prefect looked up worriedly. "We have another Pokémon to train, and this one is being-" Another crash, this time of splintering wood. "- kind of difficult."

"_Fetch_!" an angry voice screamed. "_FETCH! _FETCH!!!_"

"Another Farfetch'd?" Mercury asked him. "Two in one week?"

He shrugged a little. "Coincidences can be strange."

"_PSYFETCH!_" the voice screamed, as more wood splintered somewhere within the tower.

"_Psy_fetch?" she echoed, her frown deepening. "What kind of Farfetch'd yells '_Psy_fetch'?"

"'_Psyfetch'?" he echoed, sounding confused.

"I distinctly heard 'Psyfetch'."

"I doubt that."

"I'm positive I heard something yell 'Psyfetch'!"

Prefect shrugged slightly, taking the potions out of her glove. "Thank you again for delivering the potions," he said. "I'm sorry I cannot help the team." With that, he slammed the door in her face.

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It was almost 10:00 when Mercury marched, out of breath, back to the PokÃ©mon Tower. Again, she pounded on the door. "Open up!" she demanded. "Now!"

She didn't stop pounding until she heard grumbling on the other side of the door. Even when she heard it, though, she kept the angry expression on her face. It was the first thing to greet Dr. Ko when he finally managed to tug the door open far enough to see her. "What do _you_ want _again_?" he demanded sourly.

"What I _want_ are _two_ things," she snapped in reply, putting her hands on her hips for added emphasis. "One, why did Prefect slam the door in my face? And two, what the heck says 'Psyfetch'?"

Dr. Ko shrugged a little. "I don't control _everything_ Prefect does," he replied, sounding as if he was apologizing for Prefect's behavior. "And a Psyfetch says 'Psyfetch', of course."

"A _what_?"

"A Psyfetch." He opened the door a little wider. "Would you like to meet one?"

A little unnerved, but very curious, Mercury entered the tower. It was bigger on the inside than the outside made it look. The floor was done in a spiral checker pattern. She looked up the black spiral staircase in the center of the single room; the floor must look dizzying from the topâ€¦

"This way, please." Dr. Ko signaled that she should follow him down the staircase. "Prefect let the Psyfetch out earlier, without my permission. I'm afraid it broke three frames, two vases, a table, and two chairs, before I could get it back into its cage. He takes pity on the others, you see. But the others are too dangerous to let out of their cages."

"What? what?" she stuttered, not understanding. "What others? What cages?"

Dr. Ko didn't answer. He jumped over the last stair. "Careful of that one," he warned her. "Don't step on it." She jumped over it, too. "Prefect prefers the top of the tower, for his own reasons," Dr. Ko said, shrugging. "Down here it's nice and cool, isn't it?" Mercury rubbed her arms: it was cold, and damp. It was like being in a dungeon. Dr. Ko pushed open a door, and bright light blinded her. "Here we are," he said, walking into the room. "My laboratory, and my family."

Mercury blinked rapidly, trying to clear up the spots of color in front of her eyes. She rubbed at them, then looked around.

At first, all was yellow, with blurs of brown and gray. Then, as she kept blinking, the yellow solidified into walls, the brown into tables, and the gray into computer stations, chairs, and a row of cages. The cages were stacked two high and eight across, with heavy locks on the doors. At the end of the row were five larger cages, ones that were about the size of four of the others. In amazement, Mercury stared into the first cage. One of the occupants regarded her with a scowl, then leaped at the bars. "Cle-FLUFF!" it shouted, rattling the bars with its tiny, handleless arms.

Mercury screamed, jumping away. "What is _that_?" she shrieked.

The pinkish-colored thing rattling the bars stared at her angrily. It inflated its little body to twice its size. "CleFLUFF!" it snapped at her.

"That's Clefluff, of course," Dr. Ko replied calmly. "And with it is Jiglaury. Much calmer, but rather boring, I'm afraid. I was asked by a colleague of mine to create the world's cutest Pokémon, but I'm afraid the cutest aren't exactly the nicest, in this case."

Mercury stared, open-mouthed, at the two pinkish creatures in the first cage. The one rattling the bars was darker, with black-tipped ears. It looked almost like a Clefairy, but its body was too short and too round, as if it had swallowed a small beach ball. Stranger, though, were its eyes: huge, round, and greenish-blue, they stared angrily at her. Its arms were too short, and didn't have any claws, much less fingers. It hissed at her. Its companion, so pale as to be almost white, looked more like a misshapen Jigglypuff, too narrow or too tall, with a short curly-cue of a tail, like a Clefairy, and small, mournful, green-blue eyes. It had two tiny little claws on the end of each short arm, and a big, oversized set of Clefairy "wings" on its back. "Jiggle-larry," it mumbled, glancing disinterestedly at her, then looked back down at the bottom of its cage. Unlike its companion, it sat forlornly in the corner, staring at the floor, as if it had been told to sit there for being bad.

"You _made_ these?" Mercury demanded.

Dr. Ko's proud smile was bone-chilling. "Yes, yes, of course! What do you think I _do_ in here?" He gestured to a cage a little farther down, on the bottom. "This is one of my favorites," he said in a low voice, as if to keep the other Pokémon from hearing. "Isn't it a beauty?"

Bracing herself, telling herself not to panic, Mercury looked.

It had the head of a Jolteon - narrow, intelligent, streamlined - but, rather than bright yellow, it was colored dull green. Instead of spikes on its body, it had dull green fur of the same color as its face - except that, on its back, looking very out-of-place, was the bulb of an Ivysaur.

"What the -" Mercury whispered.

The creature looked up at her with eyes that seemed too intelligent. A leaf that came from the back of the bulb on its back lifted a little, then swished once, back and forth. With a start, Mercury realized that what she had thought was a leaf was actually the creature's flat, green tail. "Rose," it murmured to her.

"Roseon," Dr. Ko said proudly. "Mix an Eevee and a Bulbasaur, add a little Gloom to make it reactive with a Leaf Stone, take a Leaf Stone, and - Roseon! At last, a plant evolution of Eevee. Do you know how many of my peers I've upset by beating them to it?"

"No," Mercury shuddered.

The Roseon frowned a little. "Rose," it crooned.

"Eon!" a voice chirped.

"Oh, yes, can't forget Roseon's progeny," Dr. Ko said, shaking his head. He gestured to the cage next to the Roseon's. "This is Completeon."

Mercury glanced into the next cage - and did a double take. "What is that?" she breathed.

"Completeon," Dr. Ko said again. "A sixth - and probably final - evolution of Eevee. Take a little Eevee, Vaporeon, Jolteon, Flareon -" He waved with his hand, as if to suggest listing the evolutions wasn't necessary. "Put them in Roseon, and out pops Completeon!" Mercury cringed at the horrible way he put it, then looked again at the "Completeon".

At first glance, it was an Eevee, plain and simple. But, in looking for awhile longer, it was easy to see that it was much too big - closer in size to a Jolteon or Flareon. It didn't have as much of the cute pudginess of an Eevee; instead, it was built stronger, with longer legs and a narrower face. Its ears were a little shorter and wider.

Oh, and it's fur was a dull, grayish-olive green, while the bush of fur around its neck and tail-tip were matching rainbows of white, off-white, cream, and pale yellow, giving them an odd, dingy color. It winked a long, black eye at her. "Eon," it laughed.

"I'm trying to get it to say its entire name," he muttered, "but all it'll say is Eon."

The Completeon leaned against the bars of its cage, smiling up at Mercury. "Eon," it chirped again, seeming to agree.

"These are my prides and joys," Dr. Ko said, pointing into the cage above the Completeon's. "These are my Chardras."

In that cage, like the first cage, there were two creatures, but, unlike the first cage, they looked almost exactly alike. One was a little bigger, and the fin-like end of its tail was larger. "The larger one is male," Dr. Ko said. "The smaller, female. But both are my beautiful, beautiful Chardras. The first ever successful mix of fire and water Pok mon."

"What are these made of?" she asked, fearing the answer, but too afraid not to ask.

"Actually, these came from the original," he said, sounding sad. "My poor Drameleon, who died when he started to evolve into a Chardragon. I cloned these two from him."

"You cloned a female from a male?" she asked him, confused. She looked at the Chardras. They looked like Charmanders, but with lavender skin, and dark blue eyes and gray, wing-like ears, like the eyes and ears of a Dratini. Their tails looked like the tails of Vaporeons. Their small, clawed fingers and toes were webbed together.

He shrugged a little. "A male has two chromosomes of a specific type, while a female has two of the same one. I merely took two cells, removed the chromosomes that were unnecessary, fused them, and had the female."

"Brilliant," Mercury muttered, shuddering.

"Thank you." He moved to the next cages. "And this," he said, "is the Psyfetch."

"PSYFETCH!" the voice she had heard before agreed.

Cautiously, Mercury glanced in the cage. In it was a pudgy, brown-feathered bird with a long, flat bill and white chest-feathers. It clenched a long stick in the ends of its barely-apparent fingers, which were hidden under its feathers. "PSYFETCH!" it shouted again. It banged the stick against the bars of the cage with a loud clang!, making Mercury jump.

"Something I made in a moment of boredom  I regret it, now," he said sadly. "I was waiting for the Psyduck I had at the time to evolve into the Golduck I so desperately needed. It did, eventually, evolve, but Psyfetch is what I made in the meantime. I thought to combine the strength and flying ability of a Farfetch'd with the psychic powers in a Psyduck into a truly powerful bird, but all I have is a cranky bird with a big headache. Pathetic, really."

"Psyfetch," the creature growled. It stuck its stick through the bars of the cage and tried to stab Dr. Ko with it. He took a single step back, out of danger.

"And quite cranky, too," he added, giving the bird an annoyed look. It gave him one right back   a look that was eerily similar to his own. Was it the doctor's long nose that gave them a strange resemblance, or was it simply because the Psyfetch was mimicking him?

Mercury wasn't sure, and wasn't sure if she wanted to be sure.

"And here we come to the larger menagerie," Dr. Ko said, standing in front of the first of the larger cages. "This is Mr. Jynx."

"Gee," a little voice murmured.

Her frown growing deeper by the moment, Mercury peered into the larger cage - and her mouth fell open again. "It's a kid!"

The little boy looked at her. His hair was a dark, dull blue-gray and thick, his body kind of pudgy but his arms thin. His skin was the color of ash, except for his hands, which were flat white. His legs and feet seemed kind of short while his hands kind of big. There was something odd about his eyes, something she couldn't place. His nose was almost nonexistent. All he wore was what looked like an oversized, faded red tee-shirt with a big pink oval on it. "Gee," he said again.

"He does look like one, doesn't he?" Dr. Ko agreed. "I had been wondering what a mix of a Mr. Mime and a Jynx would look like - and this is what it looks like." He moved on to the next cage. "This is one of my other - disappointments," he sighed. "Miss Craine, meet Hitmon."

Mercury was shivering from the mix of the cold air and how freaked out she felt. She stared at this new creature - a creature about a foot shorter than her who looked at her with big, shy, shadowed eyes. "I wanted to mix the powerful punches of a Hitmonchan with the incredible kicking ability of a Hitmonlee," Dr. Ko told her. He sighed in frustration. "Instead, I got the pathetic kicker of a Hitmonchan and the pitiful puncher of a Hitmonlee. The only thing good about it would be its elastic limbs - if it could control them, which it can't." The creature bowed its head, a tear glistening in its eye. It brushed it away with its small, fingerless hand. Its Hitmonlee-like elastic elbow sagged as it bent its arm upward. It tried collecting its arm back with its other hand, but that only made the other arm sag. "Hee," it groaned in frustration. "Mohee!"

"This is Marduck," Dr. Ko said, moving on to the next cage. "One of my earlier attempts to mix fire and water. Not very successful, sadly."

"Mar -" peering at her through the bars were the wild eyes of what looked like a gray Magmar with a duck-like bill.

"The first mix I made with my Golduck, too," Dr. Ko said. "Still, very disappointing. A failure. It can't use water attacks - and, though it is immune to water attacks, its fire attacks are weak. It can take anything from a water Pokémon but it can't do any significant damage to one, either." He sighed, moving on to the fourth of the large cages. "This is my other use of the Golduck, another whim, really," he continued. "I thought it'd be interesting to mix all the Pokémon whose names began with G-o-l - there are four of them, after all. But, I didn't see how a Golem would work with the other three, so I didn't bother. I wanted it to be Dubadeen, but, sadly, all it can say is 'Gol'. So, this is a Gol."

"Gol," the creature murmured sadly, looking at her with long, mournful eyes, like those of the Hitmon. Mercury felt her heart turn into lead.

It was a Golduck, with the same blue skin and beak and long red eyes, but from its forehead sprouted a pale golden horn, and its arms were webbed to its sides with dark purple skin. The webbing between its fingers and toes was purple, too. Its tail was too short, and billowed out vaguely like a Goldeen's tail, but was the same dark purple webbing as the webbing between its fingers, toes, and arms and sides.

"It would probably make a powerful fighter, if I could get it to fight," Dr. Ko said. "But it won't. It just stands there like that, hunched over. I really shouldn't have wasted the effort on evolving that Psyduck. There are times I wish I had never found it in the first place. Three crosses, all of them disappointments."

"Two of them 'whims'," Mercury snapped at him.

He glanced at her, then seemed to choose to ignore the comment. "And, finally, the biggest disappointment of all." He slapped his hand on the top of the last cage. "This is Rhyta. Meant to be the most powerful, but, in the end, the most pitiful."

The creature in the last cage was small, maybe three feet high, with short legs and a shorter neck. Its muzzle bent slightly inward on the sides, giving it a vaguely horse-like face, in spite of the huge horn sprouting from its nose. The rest, hidden under its bulky, slate-colored armor, was hard to make out. It crouched on the bottom of its cage, shivering.

"It's cold," Mercury murmured.

"Oh, no it isn't," Dr. Ko said, shaking his head. "Rhyta comes from a mix of a Ponyta just before I evolved it into Rapidash, and a Rhyhorn just before I evolved it into Rhydon. Sadly, Rhyta was the result. I wanted a Pokémon who could trample as well as be trampled, and be the only one to take on damage. I thought mixing the hardness of a Ponyta's hooves with the strength of a Rhyhorn's skin would create a very strong Pokémon. Instead, I have a Pokémon the size of a Ponyta who can't bear its own weight, with an extreme weakness against water." The Pokémon shivered even harder at the mention of "water". "I've tried finding it a power belt, like those that Machokes and Machamps wear, but I haven't found one able to fit it. Until I do, all it can do is roll from place to place."

"How awful," Mercury breathed. Cautiously, she stuck a finger through the bars of the Rhyta's cage. It looked at her with the same, mournful-looking eyes as the Gol and the Hitmon. It was the same as that despairing look Flare gave her whenever she had to leave him at a Pokémon center overnight.

The Rhyta shifted one, hoof-like foot forward, then another. Then it shifted its back legs. Slowly, it stretched out its head to rest its snout on her finger, lifted its head just slightly, and licked her fingertip. Then, exhausted, it lowered itself heavily to the bottom of its cage, and closed its mournful eyes with a heavy sigh.

"This is awful!" Mercury said. Her throat was so tight, she could

barely hear herself. "Thisâ€| thisâ€|"

"Sad, isn't it?" Dr. Ko said, shaking his head sadly. "And I had been hoping so badly that it would work out."

"You are _sick_!" she hissed, glaring at him. "Sick! _Sick_!"

"Sick?" Dr. Ko echoed, startled.

"_Sick_!" she snapped. "This is _sick_! These poor things - you made them - you - you - you - you _bastard_!" she yelled. She raced out of the room, trying to see through her tears.

"Eon!" the Completeon shouted.

"Hee mo?" the Hitmon said, sounding confused.

"FLUFF!" the Clefluff shouted after her.

"PSYFETCH!" the Psyfetch yelled, probably just for the sake of yelling.

Running as fast as she could, Mercury slammed open the door and ran for the stairs. "Wait just a minute-" Dr. Ko managed to say, before the door slammed in his face. She got to the stairs, and her foot touched the first one-

-only to have it crumble into _nothing_ at her touch.

Nothing, but a big, gaping, bottomless hole.

She shrieked, her momentum carrying her forward. Her chin hit the third stair as her feet slid into the hole. She clawed at the black stairs, but she couldn't find anything to cling to. With a shriek, she started to fall-

-when a three-fingered hand grabbed her wrist, then yanked her up as if she weighed nothing.

"Mercury?" Prefect said, sounding shocked.

"Prefect, do you have any idea what your fa-" she began to rant at him, then looked at who still held her wrist.

And screamed like she had never screamed before.

Surprised, the thing let her go, and she bolted up the stairs, even faster than she had bolted from the underground lab. She had to run. Run! Whatever that thing wasâ€| she didn't even want to _know_ what that thing was! She raced up the stairs faster than she had ever thought she could possibly run.

"Mercury, wait!" Prefect yelled from the bottom of the stairs, but she was out the door and gone before she ever saw where he had been.

—

The Secret Comes Out

—
"Iâ€¦ I don't knowâ€¦ what thatâ€¦ I don'tâ€¦"

Mercury sobbed as her father rocked her from side to side, his arm around her shoulders.

The officer's voice was sympathetic, but impatient. "You have to tell us everything, Miss Craine."

"I'mâ€¦ I'm trying," she hiccuped. "Thereâ€¦ there were twelve of themâ€¦ in cages. Aâ€¦ a Clefluff, and a Jiglaury, a Roseon, a Completeonâ€¦ a Gol, a Hitmon, a Rhytaâ€¦ a Psyfetch, Mr. Jynx, andâ€¦ and two Chardras. Andâ€¦ andâ€¦ and something else." She bit her lip. How could she have forgotten one?

"What about the last one?" the officer asked. She flipped to another page in her notebook. "What did you see of the one that grabbed you?"

"It- it-" She sobbed, hiccuped, and hugged her father tighter. "It had three fingers," she replied. "Two fingers, and a thumbâ€¦ blue-gray hands, with kind of white claws, and dark blue fingersâ€¦" She sobbed again. "Itâ€¦ it's headâ€¦ it kind of lookedâ€¦ like a Marowakâ€¦ but it had big, long ears, and a horn. Andâ€¦ it had four armsâ€¦ like a Machopâ€¦"

"Slow down," the officer told her. "A Marowak's head with long ears and a horn, and four arms." She shook her head. "This guy is sick."

"That'sâ€¦ what I told him," she hiccuped.

Joshua Craine kissed his daughter on the top of the head. "You did exactly right," he told her. "Because of you, we can keep that creep from creating any more freaks like those."

"Dad," she said, pulling away, "what'll happen to them? The PokÃ©mon he's made? I mean, some of them - the Rhyta, the Golâ€¦ if you could see them, Dad. They're so sad. What will happen to them?"

"They'll be confiscated as evidence," the officer told her. "They'll be used to prove Dr. Ko is a certifiable madman, and he'll be put away for a good, long time."

"D-don't do that!" she yelled, jumping up. "You can't! You have to _save_ them, not _use_ them! Don't do it!"

"Don't you want them to stop him, Mercy?" Joshua asked his daughter, surprised. "Mercy" was an old nickname, from when she was smaller, and hadn't been able to say her own name right.

"Of course I do!" she yelled at him. "But Dad, you can't use people like that!"

"They're PokÃ©mon, not people," the officer said, standing up. She jerked her blue skirt down a little. "And we'll need them as evidence."

"You didn't see them!" Mercury yelled at her. "You didn't look at their eyes! They need help! The Rhyta needs a power belt to help it hold itself up - it doesn't need to be carried, shivering, into a court room, and be embarrassed before hundreds of people because it can't even walk without exhausting itself! They need help!"

"After the trial," Joshua assured her.

"NO!" Mercury yelled. "What if Flare was one of them, Dad?" she demanded. "Would you let him be taken from one cage and put into another? Would you let them hold him, let him suffer in a cage, until after months of trials and delays and stupid stuff go by? They need help now! They-"

There was a knock at the door.

Wiping her eyes, Mercury mumbled, "I'll get it," and rushed for the door before her father could stop her. She tugged it open sharply.

Once she saw who it was, she looked at him, disgusted, pulled back her hand, and slapped him, right across the face.

He took it without even wincing. He didn't even blink as she returned his rudeness from before, and slammed the door in his face. She turned the lock and marched back into the living room.

"Who was that?" Joshua asked.

"Prefect, son of Psycho," she snapped. Then she grunted, not happy enough to laugh.

Simon Ko.

Si-Ko.

Psycho.

Why hadn't anyone ever seen that before?

"He's obsessed, not psycho," a voice behind her said.

She whirled, startled. "How the heck did you get in here?" she demanded.

Prefect didn't smile. His face was unnaturally blank. "I let myself in," he replied tonelessly. "I need to speak with you, Mercury."

"You'll say what you have to say right here, Mr. Ko," the officer said.

He nodded slightly. "Very well." He blinked, then looked at Mercury. "I need to speak with you," he said again.

"You heard what the officer said," she snapped. She looked at the officer to get her to back her up.

The officer stood, her pad in her hand, her mouth half-open. Her eyes were focused somewhere near Prefect's head. Her father was sitting,

perfectly still, his head turned slightly, as if he had been about to turn around, but had frozen.

Frozen.

Mercury turned back to Prefect, and took a step away from him. "What did you do?" she demanded, her voice hoarse.

"She said I had to say it here," he replied. "She didn't say I had to say it so they could hear, which is fortunate, because I can't let them do that."

"What's going on?" she demanded. "What do you and your dad _do_ up there? I thought-"

"What you thought was right," he cut her off. "I raise PokÃ©mon. My father potters around his laboratory all the time. When he doesn't I try to let the others out once in a while. You were there when I had to come to the door and Psyfetch got around on his own awhile. Father just wants to let them rot in their cages. I don't. They're alive, and they can be trained. Anything can be trained. I can be trained, Flare can be trained, Psyfetch, someday, can be trained."

"What does that have to do with anything?" she demanded. "What's wrong with them?" she added, pointing into the room where the officer and her father still remained motionless.

"They're completely disabled," he muttered. "Completely paralyzed. However you want to say it, it doesn't matter, they're not hurt."

"Whatever you did, undo it!"

"It will be undone, but not now!" he snapped. "Do you or don't you want to help the others?"

"Others?" A cold feeling ran down Mercury's spine. "Why do you keep calling the PokÃ©mon 'others'?"

He shook his head. "They can't stay in cages all their lives," he said, clenching his fists. "Mercury, if the authorities take the others, they'll be in cages all their lives - if not as scientific experiments, then as freaks of nature. I'll be arrested when they take Father, because I never reported him. They might let me go because he's my father, but I don't know. All I know is that the others don't stand a chance if the police take them." He swallowed heavily. "Mercury, I want _you_ to take them."

"_What_?!"

"I want you to take them," he said again. "Rose, Mr. Jynx, Marduck, Eon, Jiglaury and Clefluff, Rhyta, Gol, Male and Female, Hitmon, Psyfetchâ€¦ take them all. Please."

"Me?"

He laughed bitterly. "Do I know anyone else?"

"I don't-"

"The only times I've ever been out of the towerâ€¦ the only times I've ever been out of the tower have been when I came to pick up the supplies. I've never done anything else, besides train PokÃ©mon and avoid Father's experimenting when I could. The othersâ€¦ they mean more to me than anything. Please." He reached into his pocket. "Here." He held out his hand. "Take these, come with me, quickly, there should still be time."

"What? I don't understand!"

"Take these!" he snapped.

In spite of herself, Mercury put out her hand. He lowered his. In her palm, he placed a dozen pokÃ©balls. "They'll go in if I tell them it's all right - even Psyfetch and Marduck. Please, Mercury." He looked at her with those sad, knowing eyes. Eyes whose secret she knew now, too. "If it isn't you, I don't know who it can be. I just don't. You've seen themâ€¦ and I trust you."

She grimaced, looking at the pile of pokÃ©balls in her hand. How could she say no, if he trusted her?

He didn't smile as she returned his gaze. "We have to hurry," he said.

*

The sound of the door slamming made Joshua Craine jerk in surprise. Hadn't Mercury closed the door already? "Who was that, Mercy?" he asked her, turning all the way around.

She wasn't there.

The officer blinked. "Where'd they go?" she demanded. He turned to look at her, and shook his head.

The officer scowled, then ripped a walkie-talkie off of her belt. "This is Officer Jenny of Haven Town, to all available units of Viridian City, Pallet Town, and Haven Town! I need everyone who can get there at the PokÃ©mon Tower in Haven Town - now!"

*

Mercury was out of breath before they'd gotten halfway to the tower. Prefect was almost impossibly fast, and she was already exhausted from her run home. "How much farther?" she asked between gasps.

"Too far, with you sounding like that," he muttered, stopping. He held out his hand. "Quickly. I can make it faster."

"What do you mean?"

"Just take my hand. Quickly."

"Everything has to be quickly with you!" she snapped, grabbing his hand.

"That's because everything is going to fall apart quickly."

There was a sudden, weightless feeling, one that made Mercury's

stomach heave. She felt dizzy, and fell to her knees, gagging. "What _was_ that?" she demanded, choking. She seemed to be asking that a lot, tonight.

"Never teleported before, huh?" Prefect asked, sounding slightly amused.

"What teleported us?" she asked. She looked around, and was surprised to see that they were outside the tower.

"Come on. There isn't much time." He shoved open the heavy door of the tower, almost as if it wasn't there.

She got to her feet as fast as she dared, and stumbled after him. "You didn't answer my question!"

"There isn't time for questions," he replied sharply. "Only action. And, this time, remember to _avoid_ the bottom stair. Father booby-trapped it. I wouldn't be surprised if fixing it was the first thing he did. You didn't tell anyone about falling through a faulty stair, did you?"

With a start, Mercury realized that she hadn't. "When they come to check the lab, someone will fall!"

"That's what he's counting on." He ran down the stairs so quickly, it was almost as if he wasn't touching them. Somehow, Mercury kept up, without tripping and falling. They both jumped over the repaired stair, and Prefect opened the door to the lab.

The most noticeable change was that the computer equipment was gone. "He's already started packing up," Prefect said, scowling. He went to the first cage, standing in front of it. Clefluff looked up at him, without banging on the bars. Jiglairy looked at him curiously, and stood up. Reaching into his shirt, Prefect pulled out a thin, metal chain, on which hung a pair of keys. He slipped it off over his head. He held it in both hands, then jerked them apart, snapping the chain as if it was a dry twig. He threw one of the keys to Mercury. "Unlock the cages," he said. "Get them out. We'll worry about getting them into balls later."

Going to the last cage, she slipped the key into the lock on the door, and turned it one way. Nothing. Turning it the other way produced a little _click_ sound. She pulled the key out, and swung open the door. The Rhyta looked at her mournfully. "How are we going to get the Rhyta out?" she asked. "We can't carry him!"

"I'll deal with him," he replied. "Just keep unlocking the cages. Psyfetch, keep that stick to yourself, understand me?"

"PSY!" the duck snapped.

She unlocked the Gol's cage next. It straightened a little, before walking out of the cage, then stood tall. It was about five feet tall, a little shorter than Mercury. It walked into the Rhyta's cage, and placed a gentle, webbed arm over its back. "Gol," it murmured to its friend.

"Reee," the Rhyta replied, closing its eyes.

Next was the Marduck's cage. Its fiery eyes watched her warily as she turned the key in the lock, and let it free. It pushed open the door the moment the lock turned. "Duck!" it snapped, looking toward the end of the cages.

"Gol, gol-gol," the Gol spoke.

"Marrrrrr," it growled.

"Gol!" the Gol snapped in reply.

"Now isn't the time for jealousy, Marduck," Prefect said as he opened the door to the Completeon's cage. It bounded out happily, and rubbed its cheek against the cheek of the already free Roseon. "We're leaving."

The Roseon turned its too-intelligent, and now confused, eyes on Prefect. "Rose?" it asked.

"Yes, Rose, forever," he replied.

"You understand them?" Mercury asked, surprised, as she unlocked Mr. Jynx's cage. It was impossible to think of that as being a species label, and not a name. The boy-looking mixed-up PokÃ©mon bounced out of his cage like a little boy allowed out of the corner he'd been sent to for being bad. It picked up the free Clefluff and squeezed it happily, only to get cuffed in the face. Dazedly, it put it back down. It instead picked up the Completeon, and hugged that, and the Completeon purred in reply.

"Of course I do," Prefect replied as he lifted the second Chardra out of its cage, and placed it gently on the floor. He moved over a cage, unlocked the door, and the Psyfetch fluttered clumsily out, its stick clenched tightly in its barely-existent fingers. "It's not like I had anything better to talk to here. You guys go. I'll deal with Rhyta."

"But--"

Prefect glared at her. She cringed back, startled: there was no sadness in his eyes, now, only determination. Perhaps twelve, maybe twenty times before, she had seen him, seen those gray-blue eyes, but these weren't the same ones. "Just go," he snapped. "And remember to watch out for the first stair. Rose, help Mercury get those who can't get over it themselves by lifting them across with your Vine Whips. All of you, _go_!"

"Psy!" the Psyfetch snapped at him.

The Clefluff inflated itself. "Cle-FLUFF!" it seemed to agree.

"No. You two go with the others. When you're safe, let Mercury put you into pokÃ©balls. _No questions!_ Do it. I'll catch up."

"Prefectâ€¦" Mercury stopped at the door. Mr. Jynx opened it for her, and looked back, as if to ask why she wasn't doing what Prefect told her to. "What aboutâ€¦ that other one?"

He gave the Gol a shove toward the door. The Marduck grabbed its

fellow part-Golduck's hand and hurried toward the door. "What other one?" he muttered.

"That's the one that caught me. On the stairs."

He looked up, his face expressionless. "Don't worry about it," he said. "Just worry about these."

"But if we're taking-"

"Just go!" he snapped. The Marduck growled, and shoved against her; Mr. Jynx grabbed her hand, urging her to come. With one last glance at Prefect, Mercury let herself be ushered out of the room.

Mr. Jynx jumped easily over the first step. She picked up the smaller Chardra, and handed it to it. Mr. Jynx put it down quickly, and reached out again. A pair of Vine Whips sprouted from the Roseon's bulb; one picked up the Hitmon, the other the Completeon. The Roseon deposited them on the third step even as Mercury handed the other Chardra to Mr. Jynx. The Clefluff and the Jiglaury were passed up next. The Gol gripped the Marduck under its armpits, and, jumping, took them both to the fourth step with an odd, bent-armed glide. With a slight grunt, Mercury lifted the Roseon up and placed it on the second step. The Psyfetch flapped up the staircase ahead of the others. With one last glance toward the still closed laboratory door, Mercury jumped over the last step and ran up the others after the Pokémon. What was Prefect doing to the Rhyta? How was he going to get that heavy thing out of that little cage, much less out the door, and up the stairs?

Grimacing to herself, Mercury ran up the last of the stairs.

"No! No! No, what are you doing? You brat! No!"

Roughly, Dr. Ko grabbed her arm as he came down the winding stairwell. He twisted her roughly, dragging her back up the way he'd come. "What are you doing?" he snapped viciously.

"I'm saving them!" she snapped in return, then winced as he twisted her arm even more.

"No! They can't be allowed outside! They'll get hurt!" Up the stairs they climbed, higher and higher, spiraling ever upward. She closed her eyes; looking up only looked into a dead end, and looking down only showed her the nauseatingly dizzying pattern of the floor far below. "That Psyfetch - all it does is whack everything with that stick, it doesn't know any attacks! And those Jigglypuff-Clefairy crosses - one is just as bad as the Psyfetch, and the other won't do anything at all! My poor Roseon - that bulb is too heavy for its back, it needs my care! And my Completeon can never decide which of its attacks to use before it's too late! I already told you, Marduck is too weak, and Gol won't do much more than Jiglaury will! At least you couldn't get Rhyta out of there! Oh, no! It can't even walk!" Mercury stumbled as she tried to go up another step and found out there weren't any. They were at the top of the stairs, the top of the tower. Over a hundred feet in the air. Her legs burned, from all the running, and now from climbing so many stairs. Her arm tingled, almost numb, from the angle it was at; she couldn't feel her fingers at all. "All my work, escaped! Escaped!" he moaned. He brought her right to the edge of the window. She closed her eyes again - he'd

drop her, here and now! But no! he didn't push. He just stopped, and moaned again. "Look at them, down there! Look at them!"

Opening her eyes, she looked. Down, down, so far down, she could barely see the lavender of the Chardras and the dull orange-red of the Marduck! but how? She looked straight out, and was surprised to see pink.

Dawn? Already?

Looking down again she was also surprised to see flashing lights, and headlights. She squealed as one of the headlights came within a foot of Mr. Jynx. A mumbled voice - probably a short exclamation - could be heard as the headlight turned over - obviously, it was a motorcycle. Mr. Jynx cringed, his oversized hands over his face.

Soon, with the eleven Pok  mon, there was an equal number of flashing lights and wailing sirens. Among the sirens, she could hear the wail of one of the Chardras. The two stood together, with the Clefluff, the Jiglaury, and the Hitmon. The Marduck and the Gol stood together with the Rhyta and Psyfetch, who brandished his branch threateningly. The Roseon and the Completeon hurried to where Mr. Jynx was still cowering.

Wait.

Mercury blinked rapidly, and looked again.

Yes - between the Marduck and the Gol, and the Psyfetch, shivered the gray mass of the Rhyta.

"_What_?!" Dr. Ko bellowed. "How did the Rhyta get outside?!"

"Teleport," Mercury whispered, as it clicked. Whatever had teleported her and Prefect to the tower had teleported him and- She looked around below, but couldn't see Prefect among the wailing sirens and flashing lights, the milling police uniforms and bright headlights.

"Dr. Ko!" the familiar voice of the officer shouted through a bullhorn. "We have the tower surrounded! Come out with your hands up!"

"I put my hands up, and Miss Craine goes out the window!" Dr. Ko shouted down. Mercury clenched her eyes shut, and whimpered. "Don't worry," Dr. Ko whispered. "I have no intention of letting you go."

"Thanks," she muttered.

The officer put down her bullhorn, but her loud, strident voice could be heard just as clearly without it. "All right, people, we have a hostage situation here! Bring him forward!" She turned back to look up. It was easy to pick out the one with the bullhorn, even though two other officers below looked identical to her, from this distance. "Listen to me, Dr. Ko! We have your son here. He's turned himself in. We're willing to consider a trade if you come down willingly."

Dr. Ko burst out laughing. "You can't arrest him!" he shouted back.

"He's already turned himself in!" the officer said.

Dr. Ko just kept laughing. "You can't arrest him!" he shouted again.

Now, as one of the other identical-looking officers stepped forward, Mercury could see the familiar dark hair of Prefect Ko. His tanned face looked upward. "It's over, Father!" he said. His voice seemed no different than from when he spoke normally, soft and vague, but still, Mercury could hear him clearly. "It's over."

"What did I tell you about wearing that!" Dr. Ko shouted. "Stop it! This instant - stop it!"

"It's over!" Prefect shouted, this time with his voice raised. "All of it - it's over! No more!"

"Let him go!" Dr. Ko shouted at the officers. "Let him go! You can't arrest him! You can't!"

"It's over," Prefect said again. Silence fell between the two groups: the police and Prefect below, Mercury and Dr. Ko above.

Then, Mercury felt that weightless feeling come again.

"Oh, no!" she moaned.

In an instant, the two were on the ground. Dr. Ko's eyes were wild as he stared at Prefect. "How could you?" he demanded. "I made you! I perfected you! How could you do this to me?"

"It's over," he said again. "Do you think I like any of this? I can't stand it anymore! It is over, Father!" he snapped harshly. "For you, for me, for all of it. It's over. It's done. It's ended. Let Mercury go."

Dr. Ko shoved Mercury roughly. She stumbled forward, missing Prefect by a foot. A hand she couldn't see grabbed her arm, steadying her. When she turned to look to see who she should thank, she saw that Prefect had his arms crossed. Who had caught her? Dr. Ko's harsh laugh brought her out of her thoughts. She looked to see him grin sickeningly as he jabbed a finger at Prefect and burst out laughing again. "But don't you see?" he demanded as two officers took his arms. "You can't arrest him! You can't! He's not under your jurisdiction, Jennys! Hah hah! You can't arrest him!"

"Nobody's above the law," the officer with the bullhorn snapped at him.

Dr. Ko just laughed. "Hah hah! You don't see it! Hee hee hee! The law doesn't apply to him! Hee hee! You can't see! Ha hah ha! Hee hee! Hoo!" He just kept cackling as the officers beside him had to lift him up to get him to move forward. "The law doesn't apply! It doesn't apply! Hee hee ha! Woo hoo! Ya! Hee ha hah!"

"Would someone please gag him?" one of the officers who looked identical to the one with the bullhorn muttered, rubbing her

forehead. Even up close, the resemblance was nerve-wracking.

"Read him his rights, first," the other one said. "Especially the one about the right to remain silent!"

Prefect walked up to them, putting his hands forward. "Don't listen to him," he said softly. "Just don't listen."

Meanwhile, the Pok  mon had grouped around the Rhyta. They watched the officers with suspicion, while the officers themselves didn't seem to know quite what to do with them. "Somebody call Joy at the Pok  center," someone suggested, only to start an argument about which Joy at which Pok  center.

The twelve Pok  mon watched what was going on, some scared, some angry. The Psyfetch, especially, was getting into a fouler and fouler mood. Its head jerked from side to side, glaring at everyone and anything that made the mistake of making eye contact. It looked at Prefect just in time to watch one of the identical officers clamp handcuffs on his wrists. "_PSYFETCH!_" it shouted at the top of its voice. The other Pok  mon turned to look. The Psyfetch pointed with its stick. "PSYFETCH!" it shouted again.

Getting out was one thing. The Doctor getting arrested was a _good_ thing!

But Prefect?

Never!

With a third yell, the Psyfetch leaped on the nearest officer, beating on him with its stick. The officer yelled as the Psyfetch kept hitting him, until he ran.

The Completeon jumped forward. With a shout of "_Eon!_" electricity crackled, then lit up the air, as its Jolteon heritage allowed it to use its Thunderbolt attack. Half the officers fell, stunned.

"No!" Prefect yelled, watching with wild eyes, his hands cuffed in front of him.

"I thought you said they weren't trained!" Mercury yelled at him.

"_I_ trained them!" he yelled back. "Stop! All of you, stop it!"

The Pok  mon weren't listening. Panicked, afraid, angry, all with their own personal mix of those three emotions and others, they fell on the humans. Mr. Jynx kicked at the shins of one officer, making him stumble back, then, with a wave of both hands, made a cube of clear ice barriers appear around him. The Hitmon threw itself on an officer, wrapping her in its elastic limbs, until she fell, unable to move. The Roseon wrapped up another officer with its vine whips.

"Stop it!" Prefect yelled, but among the sirens and other shouts, he was lost. "Stop it!"

An officer thought to pull his gun. A sharp _crack_ broke through the noise. With a shriek, the Marduck grabbed its own arm, cringing. Then

it snarled, opened its mouth, and blasted the officer who'd shot it with a flare of fire.

"Yes!" Dr. Ko shrieked happily. "Yes! Yes! Yes!"

"Stop it!" Prefect yelled at the same time. His gray-blue eyes darkened. "Stop it!"

Another officer pulled a gun. The Gol leaped into the air, and its eyes turned a brilliant blue. It opened its mouth wide. The officer jerked, gasping. The gun fell from her hand as an aura of light spread from her, and entered the Gol's gaping mouth.

"Yes!" Dr. Ko yelled. "_Yes_, Gol! You _can_! You _can_!"

"Stop it!" Prefect yelled as loudly as he could, his eyes growing darker and darker, the pupils disappearing, the irises growing to hide all sign of the whites of his eyes. "All of you, just stop it! Stop it!"

Clefluff leaped on an officer, slapping her in the face again and again. When she went to grab the pinkish Pokémon, Jiglaury, with a sudden burst of energy, jumped straight up, and clamped small, but needle-sharp, teeth into her hand.

Mercury looked around, terrified at the chaos. Only Dr. Ko, watching from a police cycle, Prefect, standing apart, the Rhyta, cowering and shivering in the middle of the fight, and herself, weren't somehow in the fight. Mr. Jynx sat on top of the ice box he'd put the officer in; the officer shouted soundlessly, taking a moment every few seconds to rub his arms for warmth, while Mr. Jynx made ice barriers appear here and there, to help the other Pokémon. The Marduck clutched its arm as it blasted an officer the Completeon had just drowned in a flood of water. The Completeon was especially dangerous; there was no telling what would come out of its mouth when it turned to face a new opponent. Fire, water, ice, stun spores, leech seeds - the list seemed endless. And, when it seemed like it could do no more damage, it clenched its eyes shut, bared its teeth, and electrocuted anything within a few feet of it. The Psyfetch beat up anything that came in reach of its stick. The Gol flew in the air on its webbed wings, draining energy from the officers, until it landed, too heavy to fly, and fell, exhausted, against the Rhyta.

Mercury watched it all with an immense feeling of helplessness. She looked back at Dr. Ko, but all he was doing was cackling. She looked toward the officers, but they were too busy to even think of establishing order. Finally, in desperation, she looked to Prefect, even though he was handcuffed - and her mouth fell open.

The sad eyes she'd gotten used to were gone, replaced by glowing orbs of grayish-blue. A purple halo surrounded him, seeming to vibrate with emotion. "Stop it!" he shouted, unheard. "All of you, _stop it_!" Suddenly, there was a flash of brilliant purple light; Mercury turned away, shielding her eyes. Blinded, she could only listen as silence fell exactly as Prefect screamed:

"STOP IT, ALL OF YOU!"

The scream seemed to course through her, shattering her eardrums. She screamed, falling to the ground. Around her, she could vaguely hear

other cries of pain.

Then, after a long silence, she heard a voice.

It was Dr. Ko's voice, strangely quiet and rational after he had been laughing so long. "Yes," he said. "I told you never to wear that. Now everyone can see you for what you truly are, my beautiful perfection."

Forcing her eyes opened, forcing the ringing out of her ears, Mercury lifted her head and looked at where Prefect had once been.

Beyond the now broken handcuffs, there was no trace of him.

Onlyâ€|

Dr. Ko cackled again. "I found it!" he cried happily. "I found it! Twenty years, it took me, to find how to mix fire and water, but I did it! And only three years later, I found it. The recipe for the perfect PokÃ©mon!" His singsong chant was made eerier by the stunned silence.

"The Brilliance of an Alakazam,

The Seed of a Bulbasaur,

The Fire of a Charmeleon,

The Aura of a Gastly,

The Strength of a Machop,

The Power of a Marowak,

The Energy of a Raichu,

The Balance of a Raticate,

The Grip of a Tentacool,

And the Poison of a Venomoth!"

It stood, about half a foot taller than the Gol, a creature that was dull, gray-blue in color from head to foot. Its head was like that of a Marowak, only more angular, with far larger, longer eyes. Its ears were long, somewhat like those of an Alakazam. From between its ears there was a small, blunt horn, like the horn of a Charmeleon. On either side of its face was a separate pair of whiskers. Its neck wasn't long, or short, but its shoulders were broad and strong - all four of them. The creature had four arms, not as bulky muscular as a Machop's, but still powerful. They each ended in hands with dark blue fingers, hands with two fingers and a thumb, all of which were tipped in claws. Its legs were powerful, longer than the arms, with three toes that, like the fingers, were darker than the rest of the creature, and ended in claws. Behind it, wings like a Venomoth, only twice as big and vaguely see-through, stood at rest. A long, thin tail whipped out behind it, a tail that ended in a lightning-bolt-like shape, like the tail of a Raichu, only it, like the creature's fingers and toes, was tipped with dark blue.

Around the entire creature, there was a vague purple aura, an unearthly glow that made it seem even more unreal than its motley appearance already made it.

"To that, there can be no match! No equal!" Dr. Ko laughed again. "Can you arrest that, Jennys?" he snickered at the officers. "Hmm? Care to arrest a PokÃ©mon? What_ever_ will your _bosses_ say? Since when did you arrest _PokÃ©mon_, hmm? Hah ha! Arrest a PokÃ©mon! Woo! They'll LOVE that! Hah ha hah!"

The creature whirled around, its tail snapping the air. Mercury gasped to see, between the semi-see-through wings, there was a bulb, like that of a Bulbasaur. From that bulb, she could see at least a dozen pale blue stingers protruding. _The grip of a Tentacruel_, the doctor had saidâ€¦ did he hide the tentacles of a Tentacruel in the seed on his back? Mercury shuddered, hugging herself.

"_Shut up_" the creature snapped, its soft voice seeming unsuited for its harsh words.

"Did you ever tell anyone how you got your name when you went to town?" the doctor cackled from where he was jammed in the side-seat of a police motorcycle. "How, when you were finally finished, when you were finally born, you mixed up the letters in my head? Remember? You were to be Perfect!" the doctor laughed, tears streaming down his face. "But you messed up the letters! You mixed them up in my head! You made me name you Prefect instead! Whoo-hah!"

Mercury stared at the creature's back. Could itâ€¦ really? Her eyes fell on its three-fingered, claw-tipped hands.

-

- when a three-fingered hand grabbed her wrist, then yanked her up as if she weighed nothing -

- "Two fingers, and a thumbâ€¦ blue-gray hands, with kind of white claws, and dark blue fingersâ€¦" She sobbed again. "Itâ€¦ it's headâ€¦ it kind of lookedâ€¦ like a Marowakâ€¦ but it had big, long ears, and a horn. Andâ€¦ it had four armsâ€¦ like a Machopâ€¦" -

- "Why do you keep calling the PokÃ©mon 'others'?" -

— — —

"P-Prefect?" she whispered, unable to believe it.

The creature turned slowly, its nearly see-through wings shivering in a gentle gust of early morning wind. It lowered its arms - the upper pair each had a single cuff of metal around their wrists, with a segment of chain dangling uselessly from them - and looked at her with sad, gray-blue eyes.

Eyes that were too big, too long, so very inhumanâ€¦

â€¦ and yet the same eyes.

The same sad, gray-blue eyes that seemed to know something they didn't want to.

Eyes that did know - eyes that knew, so much, that they didn't want to know.

Slowly, the corners of its - his - long mouth turned up, in a vague smile, that, in spite of the vast difference from his tanned, human-illusion face, still managed to look so much like it. "It's over," he said, one last time.

And he, and the other Pok  mon, vanished.

—

The Aftermath

—

"Dr. Simon Ko was convicted today of inhuman acts of science, and sentenced to thirty years in federal prison. He may be tried for twelve counts of brutality towards Pok  mon, for which he may get up to forty more years added to his sentence. He also faces several lawsuits from patients of his Breeder's Center, who believe their Pok  mon may have been exploited for his experiments, which will most definitely get him sued for several thousand dollars, and will add even more time to his sentence. Good riddance, I say. Anyway, in other news—"

Fifteen-year-old Mercury Craine shut off the TV with a sigh. "It's over," she said, slouching in her chair. She scratched Flare's head gently. He whined. Realizing what she'd said, she sobbed a little, then rubbed her nose. "Almost a year, and Haven Town is doomed," she told the Growlithe. "No Breeding Center, and all those Pok  mon trainers mad at us. Nobody'll come to Haven Town now. We're cursed." She sniffed as she slid out of her chair to hug the Growlithe close. "Losing the Center, we've lost the shop. Two more weeks, Flare. Two more, and even we won't be here." She wiped her eyes against the Growlithe's soft fur. He whimpered in sympathy. "Dad has to take a job at the Pok  mart in Viridian," she mumbled. "Prefect was right, Flare. It's over. It's all over."

She sat up when she heard the front door close. "Package for you in the mail, Mercy," Joshua Craine called. She stood up, curious in spite of herself. She pulled the tie out of her silver ponytail, re-tying it as she met her father halfway between the front door and the living room. "No return address," her father said, frowning a little. "Wonder who it's from."

Mercury took the package and looked at it. It was most definitely addressed to her, but the handwriting was unfamiliar. It was marked FRAGILE in big red letters on four sides. "I wonder who it could be from," she echoed. "I'll open this in my room. Come on, Flare." The Growlithe scampered at her heels as she went down the hall, closing the door behind her. She flopped on the bed, then tore at the tape sealing the box until finally one end opened. She reached inside, and felt a piece of paper. She pulled it out; it was folded in quarters. Unfolding it, the same, odd, unfamiliar handwriting said:

"_Mercury -_"

—

No one knew me better than you. I do not mean the thing you saw last, but the real me, the me within. That last dayâ€¦ the Psychic part of me knew your magazine fell. I picked it up for you. And the girls screamed, because they saw a part of me I had never shown before: I showed them my wings and tail. I hate to be stared atâ€¦ I think you can understand. I couldn't help at the game, because, obviously, I would have had an unfair advantage. I hope you did well. I also hope that answers any questions that have lingered over the months. Those are the ones that have lingered with me.

I am sorry for all the pain I have caused you.

I'm sorry you were never able to become a PokÃ©mon trainer, like your father, like you wanted. But, hopefully, this gift will help you overcome the pain I know you felt for that, and, perhaps, whatever hurts you in the future.

— — — — — — — — — —

Prefect

Just Prefect."

— — — — — — — — — —

Her hands shaking, she pulled out another box, this one made out of wood. Sliding the small latch aside, she opened it.

Inside were pokÃ©balls.

Her hands shaking even more, she dumped the balls onto her bed. She counted them.

Thirteen.

Thirteen?

--

Why were there thirteen pokÃ©balls, if only twelveâ€¦

"Oh my Godâ€¦" Mercury
whispered.

—

Author's Note:

Would you like to see more of this? Though this was written as a one-shot, I have a couple ideas I could kick around if I ever get to it - but only if you ask nicely (or demand LOUDLY)! (Kiddingâ€¦ kiddingâ€¦) I kind of like this story, but as some people have been pointing out, I've been skimping on my series lately.

Since I'm sometimes asked to pronounce words I make up, I think this is a list of all the words that could be a problem, and a bunch that

I just put here for no real reason. If I missed any, it's my fault, not yours.

—

Chardra - Char-drah

—

Chardragon - _Char_ + dragon

—

Completeon - Com-_plee_-she-on

—

_Clefluff - _Cleh-_fluff_

--

Drameleon - Drah-_meal_-ee-on

—

Gol - Goal

—

Hitmon - Hit-mon

—

Liluania - Lee-loo-_ann_-ya _(I just made that up off the top of my head)_

--

Marduck - _Mar_-duck

—

Mr. Jynx - Mister Jinx

—

Prefect - Pree-fect

—

Psyfetch - _Sigh_-_fetch_

--

Rhyta - _Rye_-tah

—

Roseon - _Roe_-see-on

—

_And no, for those people who are wonderingâ€¦ I _don't_ know how he
got himself in a pokÃ©ball. I just thought that made for a cool
ending. ;-)_

—

--

End
file.